

Research on the Path of Accurately Improving the Quality of Piano Talent Training in Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of Core Competencies

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Abstract: The Core Competency Framework provides a clear roadmap for talent development in vocational undergraduate education. Its three key dimensions—cultural foundation, self-directed growth, and social engagement—align perfectly with the goal of piano programs in vocational colleges to cultivate versatile professionals who combine technical expertise, cultural literacy, and career-ready skills. This study examines the practical positioning of piano talent cultivation within the framework of core competencies, analyzing the intrinsic connections between these competencies and talent development. Addressing current challenges such as skill-literacy disconnection, curriculum-metaphyseal misalignment, and inadequate practical teaching effectiveness, the paper proposes a three-pronged approach: competency-oriented curriculum restructuring, competency-based pedagogical reform, and collaborative education enhancement. This framework offers both theoretical insights and actionable strategies to systematically improve the quality of piano talent development in vocational undergraduate institutions.

Keywords: Core competencies; Vocational undergraduate institutions; Piano talent cultivation; Precision enhancement; Applied skills

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1. Introduction

As a vital component of higher education, vocational undergraduate programs are dedicated to cultivating highly skilled professionals. The piano program, a cornerstone of vocational art education, distinguishes itself from both academic research and theoretical studies in regular universities, and the single-focused skill training in vocational colleges. Guided by the principle of “occupational needs as the orientation, skill development as the core, and competency enhancement as the goal”, it aims to produce versatile professionals capable of excelling in music education, artistic performance, cultural dissemination, and related fields^[1].

Core competencies are essential qualities and critical skills that students develop progressively during

their education, enabling them to meet the demands of personal growth and societal progress. Integrating core competency principles into vocational undergraduate piano education not only addresses the limitations of traditional models that prioritize technical skills over holistic development but also ensures precise alignment between talent cultivation and industry needs. Currently, vocational piano education still faces challenges such as rigid curricula, monotonous teaching methods, and inadequate practical training, resulting in students' cultural literacy, innovative capabilities, and professional adaptability failing to meet market expectations. Therefore, exploring piano education pathways through the lens of core competencies holds significant practical value for advancing the high-quality development of vocational undergraduate art education ^[2].

2. The intrinsic connection between core competencies and piano talent cultivation in vocational undergraduate institutions

2.1. Cultural foundation: Strengthening the artistic foundation of piano talents

The cultural foundation dimension comprises two essential elements: humanistic depth and scientific spirit, which form the bedrock for piano talent development. For undergraduate students majoring in piano, humanistic depth entails not only mastering performance techniques and understanding the history of Chinese and Western music, but also comprehending the cultural context, artistic essence, and aesthetic value of works across different piano genres, enabling performers to convey the spiritual core of compositions ^[3]. Scientific spirit manifests in applying scientific methodologies to performance training, teaching practices, and artistic innovation—such as optimizing techniques through acoustic principles and designing curricula based on educational theories. Without this cultural foundation, piano performance risks becoming mere “technique stacking”, failing to cultivate distinctive artistic styles or meet the profound demands of roles in music education and cultural dissemination.

2.2. Self-development: Cultivating the growth ability of piano talents

The dimension of self-directed development encompasses two key elements: learning to learn and healthy living, which form the core of sustainable growth for piano professionals. For vocational undergraduate piano students, this ability manifests as the capacity to independently set learning objectives, master efficient training methods, and proactively explore artistic domains, while continuously updating their knowledge and skill sets to meet career demands. Healthy living skills include strong psychological resilience, stress management, and time management—qualities particularly crucial for pianists who must endure long-term intensive training and frequent performances or teaching engagements ^[4]. A deficiency in self-development capabilities may lead to difficulties in adapting to industry changes after graduation, ultimately diminishing professional competitiveness.

2.3. Social participation: Strengthening the professional value of piano talents

The social engagement dimension comprises two core elements: responsibility and innovation, which are pivotal for piano professionals to realize their professional value. Responsibility manifests in students' commitment to moral education through music, their reverence for artistic performances, and their proactive role in preserving regional cultural heritage and promoting art education. Innovation requires students to integrate piano skills with diverse professional contexts, such as adapting traditional music, designing piano literacy programs, and curating art exhibitions. The strength of social engagement directly determines whether students can establish

themselves in fields like music education and cultural tourism, achieving a harmonious balance between personal and societal value ^[5].

3. The realistic dilemma of piano talent cultivation in vocational undergraduate colleges from the perspective of core competencies

3.1. Imbalance in the curriculum system and lack of systematic cultivation of core competencies

The current curriculum framework for vocational undergraduate piano programs predominantly follows a “skills-focused, culture-enhanced” model. While core courses concentrate on technical competencies like piano performance, improvisational accompaniment, and music theory, courses addressing core competencies—such as music aesthetics, art psychology, and career planning—are disproportionately represented as electives. These fragmented offerings fail to establish a coherent curriculum chain aligned with the three core competency dimensions. Furthermore, the content often misaligns with professional demands: music education programs lack case studies from K-12 teaching practices, while performance-oriented courses neglect stage performance and market operations knowledge, ultimately compromising students’ career adaptability.

3.2. Rigid teaching methods and ineffective internalization of core competencies

The teaching methodology predominantly adheres to the conventional “teacher demonstration—student imitation—rote practice” model, overlooking students’ active participation and individualized learning needs. In piano performance classes, instructors disproportionately emphasize technical aspects like finger techniques and rhythm, while neglecting the cultural interpretation and aesthetic appreciation of musical works. Theoretical courses often rely on one-way lecture formats, lacking interactive engagement and practical application. Such pedagogical approaches fail to stimulate students’ self-motivation, hinder the internalization of performance skills into artistic literacy, and ultimately impede the development of innovative thinking and autonomous learning capabilities.

3.3. Weak practical teaching: Lack of implementation platforms for core competencies

Practical teaching serves as the cornerstone for cultivating core competencies, yet current vocational undergraduate piano programs face multiple shortcomings in their practical components. On-campus platforms remain limited, predominantly focusing on concerts and competitions while lacking simulated teaching environments or art planning scenarios relevant to professional roles. Off-campus practice bases are scarce and lack depth in collaboration, often limited to short-term performances and internship observations, leaving students unable to engage in authentic teaching or performance projects. Furthermore, the evaluation system for practical teaching overemphasizes skill demonstration while neglecting the assessment of core competencies such as responsibility and innovation, resulting in superficial practice teaching that fails to effectively enhance students’ professional capabilities.

3.4. Shortcomings in the faculty team and lack of guidance in core competency cultivation

The faculty of vocational undergraduate piano programs faces a dual challenge: an overabundance of technical instructors coupled with a scarcity of interdisciplinary educators. While most instructors possess solid

piano performance skills, their lack of vocational pedagogical expertise and industry experience hinders the integration of core competency principles into classroom teaching. Some instructors fail to grasp the distinct positioning of vocational undergraduate education, mechanically replicating the teaching models of regular undergraduate institutions while overlooking students' career aspirations. Furthermore, the proportion of dual-qualified teachers—those with both piano expertise and teaching competence—remains inadequate, leaving students without effective career guidance or competency development support.

4. Pathways for precisely enhancing the quality of piano talent cultivation in vocational undergraduate institutions from the perspective of core competencies

4.1 Reconstructing the curriculum system and building a three-in-one curriculum framework of “Literacy-Skill-Vocation”

Guided by the three core competencies, educators break traditional curriculum boundaries to build a well-structured and organically integrated educational system. The Cultural Competency module lays the foundation for core competencies through courses like “Piano Appreciation and Cultural Interpretation”, “Music Aesthetics”, and “Art Psychology”, helping students deeply understand the humanistic essence of piano works. Specialized courses such as “Hainan Local Music and Piano Adaptations” integrate regional culture into teaching, fostering students' awareness of cultural heritage. Courses like “Fundamentals of Music Acoustics” and “Piano Pedagogy” incorporate a scientific spirit, enhancing students' teaching and performance skills. The Professional Skills module strengthens competency support by optimizing content for different career paths: Music Education includes “Case Studies in Piano Instruction” and “Instrumental Accompaniment Practice”, Art Performance features “Stage Performance and Physical Training” and “Music Adaptation & Composition”, while Cultural Communication offers “Art Event Planning and Operations” to align skills with professional demands. The Career Competency module enhances social participation through courses like “Career Planning & Employment Guidance” and “Communication and Collaboration”, while public service courses such as “Community Music Outreach” and “Rural Art Teaching” cultivate students' sense of responsibility.

4.2. Innovating teaching methods to foster the internalization and enhancement of core competencies

Breaking through traditional teaching models, educators adopt diversified instructional methods to guide students in enhancing core competencies through active participation. The project-based teaching approach utilizes real-world vocational projects as carriers, such as “Piano Enlightenment Curriculum Design for Primary and Secondary Schools” and “Local Music Piano Adaptation and Composition.” Students complete the entire process in groups, including project research, scheme design, and practical demonstrations, cultivating self-directed learning, teamwork, and innovation capabilities during implementation. The situational simulation teaching method creates vocational scenarios, such as simulated music classrooms, piano performance stages, and art event planning scenes, where students assume roles like teachers, performers, and planners to improve professional adaptability and practical skills. The blended online-offline teaching method leverages digital platforms to build online learning resource libraries, uploading piano performance videos and cultural interpretation materials for self-directed learning. Offline classes focus on interactive discussions and practical training, achieving an organic combination of “online self-directed learning + offline targeted guidance” to foster students' autonomous development capabilities.

4.3. Strengthening practical teaching and building a three-dimensional practice platform of “in-school—out-of-school—society”

With practice teaching as the core vehicle, educators build a multi-dimensional practice platform to promote the implementation of core competencies.

The on-campus practice platform establishes a comprehensive training base featuring facilities such as a piano teaching simulation lab, music composition studio, and small concert hall. Regular events like “Vocational Skills Competitions”, “Teaching Skills Demonstrations”, and “Original Music Concerts” provide students with platforms to showcase their skills and enhance professional competence. The school also forms piano teaching teams and artistic performance groups, fostering teamwork and strengthening students’ sense of responsibility. Off-campus practice platforms deepen school-enterprise collaboration by partnering with primary/secondary schools, art training institutions, and cultural tourism enterprises to establish practice bases. A cooperative mechanism of “on-the-job internships—project collaborations—employment recommendations” is implemented, where students participate in real teaching, performance, and planning projects—such as serving as substitute piano teachers in schools or participating in artistic performances at cultural tourism sites—to improve professional skills through practice. Social practice platforms organize students to engage in public welfare activities like “Rural Music Teaching Support”, “Community Piano Public Classes”, and “Intangible Cultural Heritage Music Adaptation Promotion”, helping students strengthen social responsibility while achieving the unity of personal and social values.

4.4. Strengthening the faculty team to build a “dual-qualified” teaching team with leading competence

Guided by the core competency development requirements, educators will strengthen the faculty team and enhance teachers’ ability to guide and lead.

Educators will adopt a dual approach of recruitment and cultivation, hiring pianists, music educators, and art curators with extensive industry experience as adjunct faculty. The university encourages in-house teachers to participate in vocational education training and industry practice, such as taking up temporary positions in primary/secondary schools or engaging in cultural tourism project planning, thereby increasing the proportion of dual-qualified teachers. To deepen pedagogical reforms, educators will establish a core competency teaching research team that regularly conducts activities to explore methods for integrating core competencies into piano instruction. Teachers will be supported in applying for vocational education reform projects, transforming research outcomes into teaching resources to enhance quality. The faculty evaluation system will be improved by incorporating core competency development into assessments, which will include not only teaching performance and research achievements but also student project guidance and community service participation, thereby motivating teachers to actively engage in competency cultivation.

5. Conclusion

The cultivation of piano professionals in vocational undergraduate institutions, viewed through the lens of core competencies, represents a paradigm shift from skill-oriented to competency-oriented approaches. Current challenges—including curriculum imbalance, rigid teaching methods, and insufficient practical training—have hindered the enhancement of talent development quality. By reconstructing competency-driven curricula, adopting innovation-focused pedagogies, strengthening collaborative education practices, and building a dual-

qualified faculty team, these institutions can effectively overcome existing limitations. This transformation will ultimately achieve the goal of nurturing versatile piano practitioners who possess cultural literacy, self-directed growth capabilities, and professional value.

As an important position of cultivating high-level technical and skilled talents, vocational colleges should base on the concept of core quality, constantly explore the innovative path of piano talent training, so that piano students can not only play beautiful melodies, but also achieve professional value in the fields of music education and cultural communication, and contribute to the construction of a strong cultural country.

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